

# **St. Mary's CE (A) Primary School**



## **Collective Worship Policy**

**Policy written: May 2012 by Jane Newton**

**Policy reviewed and approved by Curriculum, Teaching & Learning Committee - Autumn Term 2014**

**Policy approved by the Full Governing Body on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2014**

**Next review due: Autumn Term 2016**

**Subject Leader: Jane Hughes**

**Link Governor: Denise Keen**

### **a) THE LAW**

The legal basis for worship in a Church school is the school's Trust Deed, which requires worship to be "consistent with the principles and practices of the Church of England". It is a daily requirement, and the responsibility of the governing body in consultation with the Headteacher.

The legal right of withdrawal of pupils at the request of parents and for staff is secure.

Collective Worship is organised in whole school or class groups:

School Worship is collective rather than corporate, in that not all participants will be united in membership of any faith community. Church schools have every right to keep their collective acts of worship wholly within the boundaries of Christian character and belief, but will wish to consider the aptitudes, interests and background of the pupils in their school in the way they present these acts of Collective Worship in the educational setting of the school.

Although the 1988 Education Reform Act states that in County Schools Collective Worship should not be distinctive of any particular denomination, in Church Schools, Anglican worship should be explored and affirmed.

### **b) WHAT IS WORSHIP?**

Worship is one important way of exploring the spiritual, and a gateway to religious experience. It is an activity of response, inner response to the transcendent, to God.

Church Schools are sharing Christian worship with their children and inviting children to participate in that shared awareness and shared response. They may expect some outward conformity to rituals (as all schools do), but must always acknowledge the inner individuality of the children, not assuming them to be believers, not expecting a unified response, but acknowledging a wide range of response, from observer to active participant, from the threshold of worship to worship itself. In this way the child's integrity and growing autonomy is not offended; rather in a secure environment s/he can safely explore those experiences which for others are worshipful and may/may not become so for the child. Children are

learners in school. They will explore worship and learn about rituals, symbols, festivals and beliefs in an open atmosphere and share collectively in worshipful experiences of awe, wonder, stillness, silence, mystery, questioning, celebration, suffering, dedication, thanksgiving. They will recognise that the school affirms the truth claims of Christianity as an alternative view to the secularism they are growing up into in society.

### **c) AIMS OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP IN CHURCH SCHOOLS**

Collective Worship should be God-centred

- It should provide a breathing space in the busy whirl of school activity, a time to gather, to be still and to reflect in an atmosphere of peace and tranquillity, a time to refresh the spirit.
  
- It should be a special time with a distinctively spiritual atmosphere, conducive to worship and to an awareness of God's presence. The use of appropriate background music will help to create such an ambience and the setting should be made as attractive as possible. Often it will help if something is set up to act as a visual focus for those present.
  
- Pupils attending Collective Worship should feel calm, relaxed and secure. Above all they should be comfortable. Consideration should also be given to the manner in which pupils enter and leave.
  
- It should nourish the spiritual through a variety of words, music and images, and should sensitize children to the spiritual dimension of life. Material from the Christian tradition will ensure the Christian character of most Collective Worship.
  
- It should provide opportunities for pupils to participate in a variety of spiritual activities such as ritual, singing, dancing, drama, sharing of food and drink, prayer, quiet contemplation and meditation.
- It should encourage reflection, individual response and participation.

Collective Worship should be as Inclusive as possible

- It should be related to the pupils' own experience and concerns.
- It should foster a spirit of community within each school.
- It should acknowledge diversity and encourage mutual respect.
- It should enable all pupils to approach the threshold of worship by fostering in them a worshipful attitude characterised by feelings such as awe, wonder, being uplifted, elation, deep appreciation, gratitude, respect, reverence and trepidation.

Collective Worship should be Educational

- It should enable quality learning experiences. It should be properly prepared, executed, evaluated, co-ordinated and resourced.
- It can be explicitly related to other curricular activity, and links forged. It will naturally complement some of the work done in RE, providing insight into the nature and practice of worship.
- It should be a useful means of realising many of the educational aims of a Church School.
- It should heighten pupils' awareness of questions relating to the ultimate mysteries of life, and the beliefs held and commitments made by themselves and others in response to such questions, affirming the Christian response in an open atmosphere.

- It should heighten aesthetic awareness and enable pupils to appreciate the use of symbolism, the arts and religious language to express feelings and belief, particularly within Christianity.

#### Collective Worship should Affirm Christian Beliefs

- It should affirm Christian beliefs in Father, Son and Holy Spirit and reflect Christian teachings relating to Creation, the Fall, the Incarnation, Redemption and the Kingdom of God. The resulting Christian ethic provides a framework for exploring moral issues, e.g. ecology, pollution, stewardship of the Earth's resources, the human capacity for prejudice, cruelty, war and alienation.

#### Collective Worship in a Church School must honour the Church Foundation of the School

- Pupils must have access to a significant amount of explicit worship of a Christian kind, related to the School's actual circumstances. The price of holding distinctively Christian acts of worship may be parental requests for withdrawal or requests for other faith worship meetings alongside Christian worship. Such a price is not too high. At all times sensitivity will be needed so that what is offered is suitable for the pupils, both in terms of content and in terms of level.
- A Church School does have some responsibility for enabling pupils to make a link between collective worship in the school and the corporate life of the local Church. The individual journey of faith needs to be complemented by the use of the Church's calendar, so that the corporate and the individual dynamics of Christian faith are seen in relationship to one another.
- Pupils in Aided Church schools should engage with the celebration of the Eucharist, at the school's discretion and direction.

#### **d) GOOD PRACTICE IN COLLECTIVE WORSHIP**

##### 1. At St Mary's in the pattern for a term there will be:

- the use of themes with variety and coherence
- variation and balance in the style of the experience
- a clear pattern known to the pupils
- coherence with the rest of the curriculum
- variety of leaders in worship (e.g. Headteacher, member of staff, local clergyman, visiting outside speaker, group of children, whole class).

##### 2. Hoped-for responses may include:

- awareness of beauty and goodness
- sense of awe
- sense of responsibility
- thankfulness
- sense of community
- empathy
- thinking about others
- values affirmed
- reflection
- engagement with problems
- sense of spirituality
- sense of God
- affirmation of faith

- faith development

3. Content:

This is organised around the resource 'Values for Life' and the church's year of festivals:

Presentation may include: drama, dance, audio-visual presentations, visitors, story, processions, songs of praise, silence, reflection, religious rituals and traditions.

Clergy provide opportunities to enhance links between the church and school, share expertise in leading Anglican worship, and form positive relationships with the school community where Christian values are affirmed and lived out.

The school worships in church at least once a term: Harvest, Nativity, Mothers' Day, Easter and Leavers.

4. Evaluation of Worship:

There is opportunity for staff to evaluate the weekly theme in the worship file.

Pupils – From November 14 children can make responses in a class book to record their reflections on collective worship. On occasion governors and staff monitor the pupil voice. Evaluations are finally recorded in the toolkit. Questionnaires may also be used for pupils, staff, governors and parents. The outcome is to build up a picture of pupils' attitudes and responses to worship.

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Jane Hughes – Headteacher**

**Dated:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Sally-Ann Shotton – Chair of Governors**

**Dated:** \_\_\_\_\_

**The School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.**